Where Does The Time Go?
Smartphone Use Among Immigrant Mothers Born in the English-Speaking Caribbean

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ABSTRACT

Where Does The Time Go?: Smartphone Use Among Immigrant Mothers Born in the English-Speaking Caribbean

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This ethnographic study investigates the ways in which smartphone use shape the daily routines of seven mothers who immigrated to Montreal from the English-speaking Caribbean. Using a combination of empirical data collection through a use-tracking app installed on participants' smartphones and open-ended interviews, the paper argues that the pervasive use of smartphones in these mothers' routines creates conflict with children while simultaneously providing mothers with a valuable outlet for socialization, identity creation and the maintenance of community ties. Evidence found in this study also suggests that media literacy is a relevant concern for women belonging to this population. One of the roles of a "good" mother is media gatekeeper, and while most of the participants in this study subscribe to this belief, most of them also have very little working knowledge about the media landscape in which they inhabit, and in some cases very little ability to decode the meaning and function of basic media products. For these reasons, media literacy among this population emerged as both an area of inquiry and a possible area of further study or outreach.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, an estimated 67% of Canadians owned a smartphone (CRTC, 2015). The proliferation of smartphones has coincided with the proliferation the ways in which smartphones are used (Turkle, 2015). For many mobile phone users today, their device is essential for daily life; going a day without it on hand is unthinkable (boyd, 2013). Parents are, naturally, among these dedicated smartphone users, and this raises questions around how habitual smartphone use affects and shapes their roles as parents, and to what extent smartphone use is part of their domestic routines. For this research project, I spoke to seven Montreal-area women about their smartphone use. Six of them immigrated to Canada from the Caribbean; some from Jamaica, others from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. One is a first-generation Jamaican immigrant born and raised in Montreal. All are mothers of children aged 2-10, and all but one are single mothers.

My research question for this project is threefold: How does smartphone use structure participants' daily routines? Do these mothers perceive a conflict between their smartphone use and their roles as mothers? If so, how do they address this conflict? For this ethnographic study, I relied on two forms of data collection. First, I installed use-tracking apps on participants' phones, and then used the data collected through the app as incitement during hour-long open-ended interviews. At the conclusion of this thesis I will offer several recommendations for ways that my findings could be useful to policy makers or community workers looking to better

serve populations of immigrant families that resemble the profiles of the participants I spoke to during this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, research participants reflected on media consumption in two distinct modes. The first mode is general "screen time" – time spent using a device, for whatever purpose. The second mode is consumption of specific products on the device, whether social media, games, reading, or communication conducted via phone or text. The effect of "screen time" on social life has been widely studied over the past two decades. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents limit screen time for children under 2, because of positive links between back-and-forth speech and cognitive development around language. There was found to be a correlation between extended periods of time spent using a digital device and fewer opportunities for this back-and-forth verbal communication (Reddy, 2015) . Among adolescents and adults, heavy use of digital media -- on smartphones, tablets, or computers -- has been linked to increased social isolation and lower self-esteem (Caplan, 2007; Darcin, Kose, et al, 2016; Bianchi and Phillips, 2005) .

MEDIA LITERACY AND MEDIA ILLITERACY

Media literacy is a concept that emerged in the late 20th century. Scholars have offered broad interpretations of what it means to be media literate, leading to some conflicts and tensions around how it is defined in current scholarly discourse.

An early definition, and one which goes a long way toward defining it for my purposes in this paper, comes from Patricia Aufderheide's 1993 "Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy. She writes that a media literate person can "decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media" toward a variety of possible ends, including "informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence." (Aufderheider 1993, p. 1).

Producing both print and electronic media is slightly more far-reaching than the definition of media literacy that I am working with; whether the production of media should be included in a definition of media literacy is the subject of some debate (Hobbs, 1998). Most if not all of the women I spoke to very rarely produce media that is destined for print. Not all of them ever produce electronic media beyond texting and messaging friends and family, either. However, they all consume media electronically and are to varying degrees responsible for their children's media diet. Given the large volume of electronic media consumed in their households, an ability to decode and analyze it is of great importance. By "decode" I mean to basically identify the intent in which a media product was produced, and understand who the intended audience might be.

At the 1993 Media Literacy National Leadership Conference, educators from North America and the U.K. set forth basic components that should be included in the teaching of media literacy to young people. (Aufderheider 1993, p. 2). These include the notion that media messages are constructed, and that interpretive

meaning-making that a reader engages in an interaction between the reader, the text, and the culture.

Livingstone (2008) defines the purposes of media literacy as a normative project as threefold: Informed participation in democratic society, for which individuals must be able to parse information to come to an informed opinion; ability to function and contribute to a competitive knowledge economy or workplace that increasingly demands that workers understand their mediated environment, and furthermore often expects them to innovate within it; and third, lifelong learning and personal fulfillment, by understanding and communicating through the increasingly mediated symbolic environment through which meaning is experienced in contemporary life.

Media illiteracy has not been explicitly defined in academic literature. For my purposes, I will define it here as an inability to identify the basic profile of a media product – what is it, and what does it do? This is a very baseline definition, but one that applies to this study, where I encountered instances of very pronounced media illiteracy, where the profile and functionality of a media product was not accurately understood.

danah boyd (2014) argues that the characterization of young people as "digital natives" inaccurately ascribes expertise to a population that often lacks the tools for analyzing and understanding the media they are exposed to. Following a multiyear ethnography of American teens' networked social lives, boyd concluded that exposure to digital culture from birth does not translate into the analytical

skills required to identify trustworthy sources of information. boyd found that, for example, members of her study population expressed a very high level of trust for Google. Young people she spoke to tended to assume that the top results generated by a Google search where trustworthy by virtue of being generated by Google's algorithm -- that, unlike Wikipedia, for example, Google's algorithm is "neutral."

MEDIA AND MORAL PANIC

Concerns about media in the home – "stories from outside" – have been articulated since as early as Plato's defense of censorship in The Republic. (Roberts and Foehr, Kids and Media in America, p. 5). In the decade between 1948 and 1958, television became ubiquitous in American homes, bringing stories from outside into the domestic space at an unprecedented rate and quantity. Moral panic followed the TV boom, just as it did following the wide adoption of radio. When the internet entered living rooms via personal computers in the 1990s, the same list of concerns were repeated with a few variations. (McRobbie and Thornton, 2012.) With the wide adoption of smartphones came the now-predictable resuscitation of the same outcy: Smartphones will erode the quality of social life. (Turkle, 2015).

It would be easy to dismiss this as little more than moral panic -- a social discourse defined in the early 1970s by sociologist Stanley Cohen that associates new social behaviours or tendencies with danger, leading to the ostracism of certain groups or behaviours on "moral" bases (Cohen, 2002). But unlike radios, TVs or desktop internet access, smartphones have become a part of routines both in and out of the home. They can be used in any room, while performing almost any task.

The context of media consumption can be as important as its content. When it comes to mobile devices, the context is infinitely adjustable.

MOBILE DEVICES AND CHILDHOOD

The ubiquity of mobile devices in domestic spaces has arisen as a concern for scholars who study the effect of media on childhood. In a European Commission-led study on young children and digital technology, Livingstone et al. report that children who are frequent users of digital media do not always know the difference between being "online" and being "offline." "That distinction is not necessarily clear to a young child." (p. 3.) The same report found that children under age 8 did not generally understand any particular risks associated with digital technology use. As Livingstone put it,

> "They were aware of their parents' concerns about the risks associated with digital devices but they did not seem to feel these as significant in and of themselves; they merely represented the kind of familiar parental anxiety linked to the imposition of limits on what they were allowed to do as children." (Livingstone et al, p. 26).

MOBILE DEVICE USE HABITS

In 2014, Tecmark, a UK-based digital strategy company, conducted a poll of 2000 smartphone users in the UK. They concluded that the "average" UK smartphone user checks his or her phone 221 times per day (Rucki, 2014). While the methods used to reach this number may not be entirely verifiable, it correlates with mobile device use habits described elsewhere (Partridge and Golle, 2008; Pantzar, 2010) -- not to mention the data collected as part of this project, as we will find in the following section. Mobile devices have been found to cause addiction-like

behaviours in some users. Oulasvirta, Rattenberry, et al (2012) found that many adult smartphone users develop "checking habits" with their smartphone.

> "*Checking habits* are automated behaviors where the device is quickly opened to check the standby screen or information content in a specific application. These habits are triggered by various different cues outside the device, such as situations and emotional states." (Oulasvirta, Rattenberry et. al, 2012, pp. 107.)

The same study found that once a checking habit is in place, users tend to respond to outside stimuli such as boredom or stress by checking their phone. The reward associated with receiving a personal message via email, text or SNS is enough to compel users to return repeatedly for very brief visits.

A widely held opposing argument holds that while users who are predisposed to social anxiety run a higher risk of smartphone addiction and negative emotional outcomes caused by heavy SNS use, many SNS and smartphone users are simply interacting their social network in more ways than they used to, and do not experience heightened loneliness (Lee, 2015, Baek, Holton et. al, 2011; Yartey, 2014). Determining the participants' risk factors for social anxiety or loneliness was not a part of this study's purview. However, based on the extended conversations I conducted with participants, I do not believe that these issues played a role in their overall mobile phone use habits.

MOBILE DEVICES AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Scholars refer to the emerging patterns of communication and socialization facilitated by mobile technologies as "networked individualism." (Castells 2001, Wellman, Quan-Haase et al 2011.) Networked individualism tends to focus on the ways that the speed and variety of mobile communication can multiply and shape

opportunities for individuals. It does not, however, address the ways in which mobile technology can further reinforce structures of control and unequal divisions of household and family labour for women.

In her feminist study of the uses of mobile technology by women, Fortunati (2009) refers to the mobile phone as a "strategic tool for social labor" (p. 32) allowing women to be both more present for their families across time and space, take on more supervisory responsibilities for their children even while their children are outside of the home, and, in many cases, continue to perform paid labor at home while also fulfilling domestic responsibilities, in the cases of women who are self-employed or work from home. Frizzo-Barker and Chow-White (2012) note in their ethnography of the everyday patterns of smartphone use among 12 women that "women's use of smartphones and apps often empowers and constrains their identities and experiences simultaneously." (p. 587.)

MOTHERS AS A NETWORKED PUBLIC

Mothers have been found to be particularly active social media users, and many new mothers use social platforms to assert their new identities as mothers and leverage support from fellow mothers as they adapt to motherhood. (McDaniel, Coyne et al, 2012). "Mommy blogs" became enormously successful in the mid-2000s, and many "mommy bloggers" were ultimately hired by media companies to run newly launched parenting verticals (Klein, 2015; Khazan, 2015).

The popularity of media intended for mothers both streamlined and refined media discourses around the definition of a "good" mother, and the habits that a

"good" mother should have. (Powell, 2010). Readers can align themselves in one camp or another -- those in favour of mothers staying home with their children versus those who think mothers should go back to work as soon as they want to, for example -- but the basic lines of battle have been drawn by media companies capitalizing on the so-called "mommy wars." (Akass, 2012). The myth of the "good mother" in contemporary American culture has, in Douglas and Michaels' (2004) view, led to a competitive form of mothering that they refer to as "the new momism." The new momism requires mothers to be eternally patient and loving while acting as a primary caregiver -- even if a father is present. This role has been constructed and replicated on television, in films, and on social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. The "mommy myth" has also been confronted and subverted by mommy-bloggers who seek to dismantle this construction by laying bare the details of their "messy lives" (Powell, 2010).

Given the massive proliferation of media targeting mothers, one could conceive of North American mothers as a "networked public." Livingstone defines a public as a group of people with "a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interest" (2005, 9). By this definition, media directed at North American mothers addresses a "public" (Taylor, 2004). The internalized values defining a "good mother" have been, at least in part, influenced by media discourse around what makes a good mother. This influence is particularly significant for this study, because I asked women to describe their mobile device use habits in the contexts of their routines and

responsibilities as mothers. The process by which they constructed responses for me encompasses what they know and consider to be "good mothering," as articulated by the media.

Because of the high moral stakes attached to being a "good mother," and because of the intimate nature of our interviews (in-person, one-on-one, sometimes in the presence or near to the participants' children), it is safe to assume that, to some degree, participants wanted to appear like good mothers in the eyes of the researcher. In this way, North American media around motherhood can be considered a kind of third party in the room during the interviews conducted for this study, exerting influence in ways that I can't thoroughly account for but must nonetheless acknowledge.

DIGITAL MEDIA AND NEW CANADIANS

All participants in this study either currently use or have used social media. Numerous studies confirm that rich social worlds exist in online communities (Valkenberg and Peter, 2009; Chan, 2013). Both strong and weak ties are established and maintained through digital communication -- close family members, friends in far-away cities, acquaintances from church or work (Chan, 2013). Immigrants rely on digital communication to maintain contact with their communities back home and to access social resources in their adopted homes. In a Parliamentary report published in 2013 (Dewing, Parliamentary Information and Research Service), New Canadians' Internet use habits were reported to differ overall from those of native-born Canadians. "Indeed, in 2007, new Canadians were

much more likely to make telephone calls over the Internet or to use instant messaging than were the Canadian-born." However, the report notes that New Canadians are slightly less likely to post content to the Internet on social media than were the Canadian-born. This finding is consistent with the data found in this study on both points; six of the seven women I spoke to are active users of messaging services, but only two of the seven frequently share updates on social media.

MOBILE DEVICES AS HABITUS

I believe that it is important for me to deliberately articulate a belief that underlies the intention behind this project, and occasionally goes against the arguments of some of the works cited above. I do not intend this research project to be understood as part of a technologically deterministic argument. Although I consider arguments that weigh the effects of technology on social life as positive or negative, I do not wish to apply those value judgements to my analysis. Here I will refer to Kranzberg's First Law (Kranzberg 1986: 454-548): "Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral." In other words, technology's value or characteristics are shaped by how people use it, and how people create meaning around its use.

Rather than frame this study as an inquiry into how the tools of a digital society change our habits, I prefer to think of it more as an investigation into digital devices as part of the "tactics" of everyday life, in the sense defined by Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life (1984). The participants in this project describe how their mobile devices are used within the obligations and constraints of their lives, and as tools used to carve out moments of free time within often very

demanding days. De Certeau writes of how tactics as he understands them represent maneuvers and mobilities deployed by the less powerful to bring some agency into their dealings with powerful structures expressed through the constraints of geography and time. Global culture has brought rise to an enormously fragmented and ever-multiplying field of tactical action (to reference Bourdieu's field of action), and for the purposes of this study, I consider the domestic spaces to of these mothers to be the field of tactical action, and mobile devices to be essential components in their tactical strategies.

The practices around technology form a part of this study's participants' "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977). "Habitus" can be described as a set of practices and tendencies that flow from a transmitted sense of home. When seen alongside religious practices, family circumstances, and ideas about the roles mothers ought to play in the daily lives of their children, the smartphone can be understood as, in every case in this study, completely embedded. If the participants' respective habitus defines the boundaries of their conceptualizations of domestic sphere and routines, then smartphones and their use certainly belong to their sense of habitus. Another way in which smartphone use, when studies in this context, can be understood to be part of the constitutive material of habitus, is the taken-for-granted (or, as Bourdieu would put it, "invisible" way in which participants reach for and interact with their smartphones over the course of their routines.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

For this study, I chose to speak with mothers of children aged 10 and under who are themselves immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean. There are several reasons for my having focused on this population. I decided to focus on an immigrant population because, while numerous studies have been conducted on mothers and mobile devices (Valtchanov, Parry et al, 2016; Frizzo-Barker and Chow-White, 2012), less attention has been paid to the mobile device habits of immigrant mothers. For language reasons, I focused on mothers from the English-speaking Caribbean.

Livingtsone (2012) critiques the nation as unit of study in communications and media research in the age of globalization. She writes that without context-bound analysis, researchers are likely to fall into a trap of presenting data from one or another nation as a contextual "baseline." Her critique further reinforced my desire to focus on a specific population within Montreal, belonging to a mediated cultural context that transcends nation and citizenship. Although none of the research participants made reference to consuming media explicitly categorized as from the Caribbean, their social networks, religious affiliations, domestic arrangements and surely the content of their media diets ultimately reflect their identities as immigrants of English-speaking Caribbean origin.

This research study used ethnographic methods alongside empirical data-gathering via a use-tracking app installed on participants' phones. By employing these two methods side by side, I hoped to facilitate what Willis and Trondman call

"a dialectic of surprise" (2002, pp. 399). In their "Manifesto for Ethnography," Willis and Trondman call for an approach to ethnographic research that is made up of "a continuous process of shifting back and forth… between induction and deduction." (p. 399). My approach to this research was informed and inspired by Willis and Trondman's concept of TIME (Theoretically Informed Methodology of Ethnography) and its incitement to researchers to allow both data and field experiences to inform my analysis and conclusions, through a process less formalized and more open to unexpected outcomes.

Rather than analyzing field data through a particular theoretical lens in order to reach a desired outcome, TIME represents a "halfway house between theory and topic, connecting up relevant theoretical insights, concepts, and tools" (Willis and Trondman 2002, p. 400). In other words, data can be analyzed through different lenses in the formulation of a single argument in order to produce a valuable insight. The goal of theory as deployed in the TIME style as defined by Willis and Trondman to tease out the sensitive areas of a given topic while remaining open and adaptable to ask unexpected questions and to, as they put it, "register surprise." There should be no given answers to which an argument is heading, regardless of what theory is being used. This approach makes sense to me because mobile device use as a practice can be approached from a dizzying number of perspectives. I do not want to limit myself in how I analyze this rich ethnographic data, some of which takes the form of straightforward empirical number-crunching.

Although I never formally set out to conduct a feminist ethnography, feminist theory is relevant to my study when one considers the complexity of the power dynamic between myself and the participants. Stacey (1988) writes that exploitation is an inevitable byproduct of ethnographic research. My intention in sitting down in conversation with these women was to learn about how smartphone use shapes their domestic routines, and to hear them describe their relationships with their mobile devices in their own words. However, each time I met with a new subject, I was compelled to reassure her, either explicitly or implicitly, that my intention was not to categorize or diagnose her habits. Often, I made reference to my own habits as a way of setting a tone of openness, and to dispel any preconceptions a participant might have about my biases. Ultimately, Stacey concludes that while the ethnographic method brings with it built-in power imbalances that are not entirely compatible with feminist values, "partially feminist ethnographies" (p. 26) are possible. To be a partially feminist ethnographer, she suggests, is to remain rigorously self-aware with regards to the power dynamics between the self and other, and to allow women's stories to be grounded in their own context, rather than necessarily framed within power structures that often either reduce or subsume the legitimacy of sources' narratives.

METHODOLOGY

I began recruiting participants by contacting the Jamaican Association of Montreal. I spoke on the phone with Brie, who later became a participant in the

study. Brie runs a group for young single mothers through the association, and she agreed to let me put up a flier in her office where they would likely see it. Through Brie, I met Marie, who was the first woman I interviewed. Meanwhile, I created a Facebook page for my study and ran an ad for it in Montreal Community Contact, a newspaper serving Montreal's Anglophone Black community. I also put up posters at CLSC Cote-des-Neiges. The ad in the paper generated one participant. I asked an acquaintance who belongs to the Montreal Jamaican community if she knew anyone who might be interested, and she put the word out to her social network that she knows through church. This ended up being the most fruitful means of recruitment, evolving into a mini "snowball effect" that put me in contact with four participants.

I paid participants $50 cash at the conclusion of the hourlong interview, and offered them an additional $20 for every new participant referral. Two participants took advantage of the referral fee. I believe that the referral model was essential to the success of this study. Many women were initially unsure about allowing me to install the use-tracking app on their phones, but referrals from trusted friends allowed them to open up to me to a degree that helped my data gathering significantly.

My data gathering began with a brief introductory visit with participants at a location of their choosing (usually a Tim Hortons located in a convenient place for them), during which I explained the project and installed a free use-tracking app (QualityTime for Android) on their phones. After installing the app, we scheduled a second, hourlong meeting, at least two days later. During the second meeting, we

would use the phone-use data collected by QualityTime as an incitement to describe how smartphone use was incorporated into their daily routines. I then conducted an open-ended interview with participants during which I addressed my research questions. I spoke with participants about their daily mobile device habits, their views about social media, and their approaches to parenting children in the digital age. Interviews were conducted in coffee shops and at participants' homes.
In several cases, participants' children were present during the interviews, either because the interview was held in their homes, or because they were unable to find childcare for the duration of a coffee-shop meeting.

I chose to employ the QualityTime app as part of my data gathering in part because I suspected that participants might not accurately report their own mobile device use, whether out of the vagueness of memory or a desire to alter the appearance of their habits. I also thought it would be interesting if they verbally reported behaviour that differed from the hard data collected by the app. Observing the gap between a person's conceptualization of their own habits versus the habits recorded on the device struck me as an interesting place for possible investigation. But as it turned out, that gap would never materialize. Participants kept a close watch on the QualityTime app while it was in use, and arrived at the interview fully familiarized with the report I was about to see.

I manually recorded the daily reports generated by QualityTime into my notebook and had participants text the daily reports to me to confirm accuracy. Because this study promised that participants' identities would not be shared with

readers, I was not able to collect any photographic data of living environments, although access to participants' homes provided valuable context for their testimony. I recorded our conversations with my phone's voice-recorder and transcribed all interviews within 24 hours. Finally, I printed my interviews and coded them for themes. Interviews occurred between November 2015 and January 2016 in Montreal. All participants' names, and the names of their children, have been changed.

During my field research, Stacey's assertion that a feminist ethnographer must remain sensitive to power dynamics was at the front of my mind. With one exception, these interviews were subject to the tonal and energetic shifts of an intimate conversation during which an unequal power dynamic is at play. The one participant with whom I did not feel this was a factor was Audra, who reacted to me very much as a social peer, and who I recognized as someone belonging to roughly the same income and educational bracket as I do. In the cases of the other six participants, however, I felt a need to diffuse any tension or any sense on their part that I was would be rendering any judgement on their responses by opening our interview with a statement about my own experiences as a mother struggling to balance my digital device use with my parenting responsibilities. I explained that I decided to undertake this project in part because I noticed a recurring dynamic between myself and my children, and wanted to investigate it further. I made an effort to avoid any language that could be construed as a judgement of their choices, in particular when we were discussing our children. I never spoke about my own

parenting choices, except in cases when they aligned with a participants', and then I might make a broad indication of recognition.

The one moment during which every interview turned momentarily tense was the moment when participants handed me their phones so that I could see the QualityTime use report and note down the statistics. The sensation when the device was passed from their hands to mine was something like what it feels when a child hands you a treasured possession. Would I yank it away and never give it back? Would I start playing with it irresponsibly, and damage it? Of course, most mobile phones contain volumes of intimate data, and we rarely hand our phones to strangers. They are among our most intimate objects. One participant was worried that by allowing QualityTime to measure her phone use, it would also record her online banking activities, allowing me to see her bank balance and transactions. I tried to assuage their anxiety by making sure to always keep the phone screen angled so that they could easily watch what I was doing.

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

PARTICIPANT 1: Marie, 23 is a part-time student, and is currently unemployed. Marie and I met at a fast-food restaurant at 7 p.m. on a Tuesday night. Her two-year-old daughter, Amber, was present for the interview, and ate her dinner while we talked. Marie is a single mom, and her daughter's father has partial custody. She was born in Jamaica and emigrated to Montreal with her parents when she was an

infant. She characterizes herself as a member of Montreal's Jamaican immigrant community despite having lived here almost all her life. She contacted me after having seen the poster I put up at the Montreal Jamaican Association, where she was attending a single mothers' group.

Marie's QualityTime Report:

Day 1 (Sunday - her daughter was at her father's house, so Marie was on her own))

Total time spent on phone: 2 hours 7 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 35

Apps used in descending order of frequency

- WhatsApp (Spent about an hour in an extended back-and-forth with a friend)
- Google Dialler
- Chrome
- Google Hangouts
- Montransit

Day 2 (Monday - her daughter was with her all day)

Total time spent on phone: 1 hour 49 minutes

- WhatsApp
- Google Dialler
- Google Hangouts

Apps used, in den the two-day period during which QualityTime recorded her smartphone use, she used, in descending duration of minutes, WhatsApp, Google

Dialler (phone), Chrome web browser, Google Hangouts, and MonTransit, a public transit schedule app.

Marie lives in a one-bedroom apartment in a working-class neighbourhood in Montreal's West Island. Marie cannot afford daycare so she is with her daughter most days, although her mother also provides babysitting help when Marie has class at a vocational school in St-Henri. Sometimes she takes Amber to school with her, which she said is "very hard." Amber is a cheerful and alert toddler who sat in her stroller for the duration of our interview, chatting to us and to herself, scribbling with a pen and paper I gave her, and playing with her mom's phone in the way that toddlers do, pressing and swiping the screen to see what happens.

Of all the participants, Marie spent the least amount of time on her phone. She also used the fewest number of apps. Marie is the only woman I spoke to who does not use Facebook. She deleted her Facebook account around the time that she had her daughter. "I felt like there's no time for all that. So I deleted my accounts, and I never went back on it. If anybody knows me, they know where I live, they know where to find me. If people are important, if they really want to be in our life, they'll find us. They don't have to stalk me on Facebook."

She does use WhatsApp, a web-based texting app, as a real-time chat app, and WhatsApp is what she spends most of her time with. She recalled one day a few weeks prior to our meeting when her daughter had been with her father, and she spent six hours one afternoon on WhatsApp. "It's that one friend that I have. He moved out west a year ago," she explained. When I asked her how her daughter's

presence affected her WhatsApp use, she answered: “It’s harder to do WhatsApp when she’s around because I have to be looking at the screen. When she’s at home, and she’s playing her games in front of me or watching her programs, I know I can do it.”

I asked Marie to describe what would be going on around her during a long WhatsApp session. “It’s easier to get lost in my phone when I’m by myself. [Amber] is usually asking for my attention. But when I’m by myself, I feel like I’m in another world. I’ll be hungry, and the food will be in the microwave, and the microwave will be beeping and beeping, warning me that the food is ready, and I’ll just be texting,” she said.

Sometimes, Marie uses her phone as entertainment for Amber, usually by showing Amber videos that Marie has recorded of her, or swiping through pictures of their family in the image gallery. However, Marie does not allow Amber to play games or watch videos on the phone. Marie explained:

> The thing about the phone is, you’re too close to it. I have bad eyes, and I know how I got that. When I was little I would sit too close to the TV, and my dad wouldn’t really push me baack away from it. I don’t want that to happen to her. That’s the thing -- being near technology, it’s not good for her eyes.

PARTICIPANT 2: Janet, 39, is a mother of three daughters, aged 14, 12, and 1.5. She shares her home with the three kids and her partner, their father. She is employed part-time at UPS. Janet is originally from Grenada and came to Montreal 12 years ago. She was referred to me by a friend of hers from church. Janet and I met on a weekday morning at a Tim Horton’s. Because it was a ped day at school, she brought

her two older daughters with her. They sat at a table across the restaurant from us and worked on their schoolwork for the duration of our interview. They didn't speak to their mother while I was present.

Janet's QualityTime report:

Day 1:

106 minutes total use

45 unlocks

Apps used, in descending order of frequency:

- Texting
- Phone
- Photo gallery
- Google chrome

Day 2:

98 minutes total use

57 unlocks

Apps used, in descending order of frequency:

- Texting
- Phone
- Photo gallery
- Google Chrome

Janet uses her phone for texting, phone calls, the photo gallery, and Google Chrome web browsing. Rather than download apps, she accesses sites like Facebook

and YouTube through Chrome because she finds her phone performs better when there's more storage available. Over the three days that QualityTime measured her phone use, she used her phone for consistently around two hours per day, the bulk of which occurred between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m.

On workdays, she uses her phone for talking and texting in short bursts throughout the day, but does virtually nothing web-based. At home with her family, she'll use Chrome to access videos for her youngest daughter to watch on YouTube, and check her Yahoo email account. She maintains a Facebook account mainly so that her daughters can have access, through her profile, to a Facebook group for their basketball team. The daughters are not allowed to have Facebook profiles of their own, despite repeated requests, in particular on the part of her older daughter. Janet claims not to use Facebook much herself.

"I look at it, my friends and my cousins, and it's 'oh, I'm eating this today, I'm going to this party,' and I don't need people to know what I'm doing all the time. I find it really corny, honestly. My personal life is my personal life and I don't want anyone to know what I'm eating for supper."

If there's one way Janet is likely to "lose herself" in her phone, it's by texting. She keeps in close touch with both of her parents and friends in New York and Toronto via text. "I'm very busy, so I don't always get to call much. That's why I text," she explained. She also gets sucked into her photo gallery; there's evidence of this from QualityTime's report. One evening, starting at 9:50 p.m. her photo gallery was in use for 23 minutes.

> When I go to the bathroom, and I"ll go into my gallery. I take a lot of family pictures. And I"ll sit there, browsing, deleting pictures, and before I know it, 15 minutes will have gone by. I'll just have been looking at my

> gallery. Even texting. It's when you get into a conversation. Sometimes I'll be at home, and Illl be on a conversation (on text) and the kids, they'll be like, mom, come on, you're not even paying us any attention. It's hard. Especially when you're in a conversation. It's one thing if it's just a 'hi, what's up' kind of thing. But if [the person you're texting with is] telling you about their day, if they're telling you their problem, that's when it gets hard. Because you want to hear what the person is saying, and be that support system. But you have your kid saying, 'get off the phone! I want to talk to you!'

Janet seemed to have thought about the topic we were discussing a lot already. She seemed to have made an effort to find a way of using her smartphone in way that she felt good about. She revealed to me that her two older daughters had inspired her to be more self-aware:

"I used to talk a lot on my phone at night. I have this one friend who always has something to talk about. She'd call me a lot at night, when we were supposed to be doing homework or whatever else. And they told me about it, and I stopped. They were like, 'oh mommy, it's not fair, you go to work all day and you come home and you're on your phone.' And I'd never even thought about it! And they were right! So I apologized. I try to give them my 100% attention. Except when I'm really tired, and sometimes I fall asleep at 8.

Janet claims to enforce limits as to how much screen time her kids are allowed to have. She allows her older daughters to watch TV on weekends only. They each have their own smartphones (without data plans), which she confiscates every night at bedtime. She keeps the phones by her bed until morning. "They don't know this," she said, "but I check their phones to see what they've been looking at, to make sure it's nothing out of the way or anything." She does not allow her children access to video games at home. Her toddler daughter watches clips of cartoons on YouTube on Janet's phone in the evenings, but on the evenings that were recorded by QualityTime, she never watched more than 15 minutes at a time.

PARTICIPANT 3: Shelby, age 40, is a single mother of three children; a set of twins, a boy and girl, aged 7, and a daughter aged 2. The father of her children left the family recently and was in New York at the time of our meeting. Shelby was born in Jamaica and has been living in Canada for ten years. She runs a house-cleaning company by herself, but for the past year she has mostly been at home with her two-year-old, who does not go to daycare. I met Shelby in her home, a spare and tidy two-bedroom apartment in a working-class apartment complex adjacent to a major highway in Montreal. For the duration of our hour-long conversation, Shelby's two-year old played on the floor and watched educational programming on Netflix that appeared to be geared toward toddlers.

Shelby was referred to me by Janet; they go to the same Pentecostal church. Near the end of our conversation, Shelby told me, almost in passing, that she had been an Olympic runner for the Jamaican national team at the Athens Olympics in 2004. She had also previously been a running coach at a Canadian university.

Shelby's digital diet revolves primarily around her very strong faith. As a devout Christian, she explained to me, "my life revolves around religion." During our preliminary meeting, when I tried to install QualityTime on her phone, there wasn't enough storage space available to download it. Although she erased numerous files, she was unable to free up enough space. Because of the challenge I experienced in recruiting participants, I did not want to lose the opportunity to speak with her. I was concerned that by asking her to delete more and more files on her phone to make space for the app, she would become frustrated or experience inconvenience

and that it would jeopardize the contact we had made. I decided to proceed with the interview, pay her the fee and do a post-facto assessment of whether or not the data seemed admissible.

Shelby's turned out to be the one of the most in-depth interviews I conducted as part of this project. Although I was not able to record the time she spent on her phone, she offered to let me look at her phone, navigate around freely, and answered my questions that way. She went so far as to show me her Google search history -- something that she did with not a moment's hesitation. These circumstances, while initially surprising to me, made more sense as I spent time with her. So, while my interview with Shelby doesn't provide insight into the amount of time she spends on her mobile device (beyond the answers she provided during our interview), it did provide valuable insight into her attitude about media and her approach to her family's media consumption.

I was able to determine that a lot of space was taken up on her phone by several movies she had downloaded, all of which dealt with Christian themes. Based on her testimony and what I found on her phone, Shelby uses her phone for talking, texting,, watching movies and listening to music on YouTube, and web browsing. Shelby has a Facebook account but does not use the Facebook app. Like Janet, Shelby uses Google as the entrypoint to much of the media she consumes. When I asked her if there were websites that she visited regularly, or favourite sites, she answered simply, "Google." I determined that Shelby did not differentiate between Google's homepage and the subsequent websites that she navigated to after doing

Google searches; to her, it was all a continuation of Google. I looked at her search history over the period of a month and saw that she visited a number of different faith-oriented websites, but she could not name the website names of any of them.

I asked Shelby to describe how she uses web-searches. “To learn more, to educate myself,” she replied. “I always want to learn more, not just to get it from someone but to know it for myself.” She elaborated: “Say for instance, when I started my business. Before I even did anything, I searched, ‘what’s a good business to start in Canada?’ And then, ‘What are the downfalls? What are the positive things? How do I go about creating this business?’ A website that I like will have a lot of deep information, tutorials.” Later in our conversation, she emphasized, “I’m interested in my goals. That’s how I want to use my technology.”

Shelby’s Google search history consisted entirely -- without exception -- to questions about the Bible, faith, and personal growth. She searched for specific songs, or sections of Scripture, and often she typed questions into the search field. Reading her search history was a bit like seeing a map of her emotional life regarding her faith over a period of time. A few examples of the questions she Googled are: “Does God hear our prayers?”, “Is it true that the Devil still walks among us?” “How will God answer a prayer?”, “Keeping my family safe from the Devil’s power.” I asked her to describe the typical moment in her day when she might take a moment to do a Google search. “If I’m having a down day,” she answered. In many ways it seemed to me that used her phone as kind of portable

church -- a source for reassurance and information when she was feeling vulnerable. I will elaborate more on the notion of her "vulnerability" further on.

Shelby listens to gospel music and watches clips of particular preachers on YouTube. "So if I'm in my bed, and I'm not ready to sleep, I'll watch a video, I'll read something. When I'm in my bed I'll watch regular movies that is really encouraging, motivating, relaxing. That tell you, ok, there is hope. If I'm going through a down day, something that tells me yes, there is life. Yes, I can make it. Something positive." Much like the previous two participant I describe, Shelby is wary of social media and doesn't use it for entertainment. "I only go on Facebook if I get a message," she said. "I feel that it wastes a lot of my time. It doesn't help me to educate me or to help my business. It's just go one, see what's going on with other people. And that, I'm not really interested in." I asked Shelby to describe what she sees going on with other people. "They just show off. They dress up. Or if they're at a certain place, they'll just take pictures. New suit, new dress, they'll just take pictures to show. I don't find it really that… it doesn't help me a lot."

I asked Shelby to tell me about her phone and text habits. She said sometimes she'd talk on the phone for an hour or more at a time with "a best friend."

"My best friend will usually start as a prayer partner. We will communicate about the Bible. Most of my conversations is about my religion. If I do have a good close friend it will be based on that. One of those is here in Montreal, and there are others in the U.S. We pray together, we discuss the bible together, we discuss our ups and downs, and see how we can benefit from each other's help to strengthen each other."

When she's on the phone for an extended period, Shelby says, "it's normal" for kids to get frustrated. "They don't crave your attention until they see you on your

phone," she said. There are times when I get really frustrated [when she's on the phone and her kids are nagging her]. I'll send them into their rooms or I'll tell them to go into a room away from me. Give them something to watch or give them something to occupy them."

Shelby and I spoke at length about her approach to kids and media, which is a topic that clearly caused her some concern. She only allows her twins to watch "educational stuff," she said.

"My brother thinks I'm crazy," she said. "He's like, you gotta enlighten your kids. But for now, because there's so much going on on TV, I don't even have TV. I only have the internet TV, where I choose what they see. So they watch the educational stuff. Certain cartoons I don't let them watch. If there's violence, weapons. I visited my family in New York, and my brother was watching a violent movie, with killing, shooting. My son was scared, covering his face, saying, 'It's scary! I don't want to see it!' and that's when my brother said, 'You need to enlighten these kids! They should know reality!' And I say no, not at this age. I'm not going to introduce that to my home at this tender age. When they watch movies, it's really educational stuff. I'm sorry that I can't remember the titles."

Shelby lets her kids watch TV on weekends, holidays, and after they finish their homework on weekends. She does not let them play any video games, and they don't have a tablet. She seemed less concerned about her two-year-old's TV habits, as long as she didn't sit too close, out of concern for "her eyes." She shows her toddler Baby Einstein and other shows on Netflix that she considered age-appropriate. Shelby expressed some satisfaction that her daughter seemed to be learning something from the shows she watched.

Shelby is very concerned about the influence of the Devil on society, and in particular how that influence is communicated through media. She asked me to consider not letting my kids read the Harry Potter series because, she said, "it's

about the Devil." She asked if I allowed my children to celebrate Halloween, and suggested I consider skipping it because it teaches children about "darkness" that she felt was a bad influence. I asked her if she ever showed her kids Christian programming, because although I'm not familiar with any particular outlets, I know there are myriad websites and publishers of Christian content for adults and children. She said that she didn't know of any in particular.

PARTICIPANT 4: ZELDA, 39. Zelda was referred to me by Shelby; they go to the same church. Zelda and I met at a fast food restaurant hear her home, in the morning when her son was at school and before she had to go to work. Zelda came to Montreal from St.Vincent, in the British Virgin Islands, 16 years ago. She has a nine-year-old son who has been diagnosed with a mild form of autism. She is a single mother; she shares her home with her son and her 79 year-old "foster mother," which I understood as an unofficial designation of someone who has taken on the role of mother-mentor. Zelda is self-employed as a house-cleaner. She and Shelby may be friends from church, but their media diets and approaches to media in general bear little resemblance. Zelda is also notable within the entire participant group for having the most divergent data between what she self-reports and what was reported by QualityTime.

Zelda is a self-described "phone addict." Her QualityTime report confirmed this; she is using her phone for short bursts all day long, and for longer periods in the evenings. Her QualityTime report provided the following data:

Day 1: Total usage: 4 hours 43 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 182

Apps most frequently used:

- Facebook Messenger
- What'sApp
- Facebook
- Phone (talking)
- Text messaging
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Google Chrome

Day 2: Total usage: 3 hours 11 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 226

Apps used, in descending order of frequency:

- Facebook Messenger
- What'sApp
- Phone (talking)
- Facebook
- Text messaging
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Notes

- Google Chrome

Zelda and I started out by talking about Facebook, since it's an app she uses frequently. "There's two ways of being on Facebook," she told me. "You can use Facebook for good, and you can use Facebook for bad. The only thing I do, I use Facebook for good. I share my Christian views on Facebook. That's my basic thing, why I really took up the Facebook thing." She described "the bad" of Facebook this way: "When you're throwing words at people, or sabotaging others, and everything like that. Bad comments, swear words. I'm not for that."

Zelda was the first woman I spoke to for this project who articulated a conceptualization of a "personal brand" on Facebook. "When people see my Facebook page, I want them to say, 'Oh wow.' I want my reputation to be a good reputation, not a bad reputation. I don't want them to say, 'Why's she going to church, when she's leaving all those bad comments?'" In other words, Zelda wants her online presence to be consistent with her presence as a member of her church community. She told me she posts, "every minute" -- usually share-able images with either quotes from scripture or positive messages. She seems to think of this type of sharing as a kind of public service. "You don't know that the inspiration from that post you made will impact a person's life. That was my main goal for creating my Facebook page. Was that I share things, and for you go get something out of it. Sometimes I post and people will comment stuff like, 'wow, I didn't know that stuff was going on.' And you never know you will have that impact."

Zelda estimated that she's on her phone 80% of the time, and based on her QualityTime report that's inaccurate -- but considering she uses her phone much less frequently while she's working than while she's at home, her perception may not be that far off between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. Zelda's phone use between those hours require some unpacking because they the subject of several statements she made that appear to conflict with one another, which I list below:

1. "It's a choice I personally made, to put my phone away around my son. I'm going to spend this time with him. Sometimes I'll take him to the movies, just me and him, and I'll shut off my phone."
2. "Basically, when I'm home, he's either on his tablet, or on his DS."
3. "I'm all the time on my phone at home. For me, I think, there's nothing to do at home. So my main thing is, my phone is there, the internet is there, I can see what's up, what's happening. At home there's, what? Watch TV, clean, cook. That's it. "

Zelda claims to put her phone away around her son, but that her son is usually on a digital device himself. She also claims to be on her phone all the time while she's home. How I came to understand these contradictions is that, when Zelda's son is not using a device himself, Zelda makes an effort not to, either. She told me that when her son gets home from school, she feeds him dinner, helps him prepare for the following day at school, and helps him with his bath. During those routines, she does not use her phone. However, while he is engaged in his DS

(gaming console) or tablet, she feels that it's her time to use her phone for entertainment.

Zelda characterized her time on her phone as her "me time." She uses WhatsApp to communicate with family back home in St. Vincent, and text messaging and calling to talk with local friends. "Some of my text conversations, sometimes they'll last an hour and a half," she said. "I text one person at a time, not group texts. We'll talk about everyday stuff. 'How was your day? Do you want to go somewhere? We talk about what we're gonna do this summer, what we're gonna do with the kids during March break. I'll text my friend in the states to ask her when her day off is so I can come visit. I talk a lot on text," she said.

She also is a new fan of Pinterest, where she collects recipes, home organization tips, and hair braiding tutorials. "I'm always writing, so I'm always on my notes. I'm a Christian, so when I have my thoughts, I write them down. Personal thoughts for myself," she said. She also checks her email regularly (she has a Yahoo account that she accesses on Google Chrome), but claims that it's mostly junk mail. Overall, Zelda uses her phone for relaxation and entertainment. As she put it, when she uses her phone, "Now is my time to be by myself. And my time to be by myself, I go online, I go on Pinterest. It's my treat."

Zelda worries that as her son gets older and begins interacting with technology outside of her supervision, that he'll encounter things that could harm him. "People will send videos of people committing suicide," she asid. "I do worry

about that. How is he gonna cope? Bullying online." I asked her how she will prepare him for social media. She replied:

Well, like I said, you can use it for the good or the bad. To better yourself, or to bring yourself lower than you are...We can teach it to them, but we have to understand the influence of friends. Me, when I'm impacting my son every single day, I say, You have your own mind, and your friends don't control your mind. You know right from wrong. And he knows right from wrong. If you don't feel comfortable, don't try to fit in.

PARTICIPANT 5: BRIE, 46. Brie is a single mother of a six-year-old girl. She is originally from Jamaica, although she has lived in Montreal most of her life. She is a community outreach worker at the Jamaican Association of Montreal, and a fitness instructor. When I first met Brie, she offered to help promote my project by allowing me to put up poster at the Jamaican Association. She wanted to participate in the study herself, but didn't own a smartphone, so didn't qualify. Two months later she called me, saying that she'd begun using a smartphone and wanted to participate. We spoke in her office at the Jamaican Association. I felt that hers was an interesting perspective, as someone whose mobile device use habits were in the process of being formed.

Brie got a smartphone because she wanted access to Spotify so that she could create playlists for her fitness classes. She found that, six weeks into having her first smartphone, her use of the new device far exceeded Spotify. Her QualityTime reports are the following:

DAY 1 (Tuesday) Total phone use: 3 hours 42 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 224

Apps used in descending order:

- Phone
- Spotify
- Text
- Facebook
- Montreal Gazette

DAY 2 (Wednesday) Total phone use: 1 hour 58 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 161

Apps used in descending order:

- Spotify
- Text
- Phone
- Facebook
- Montreal Gazette

On Tuesday, Brie had been home all day with her daughter, who was home sick from school. Brie had a long conversation with a friend, during which she let her daughter watch TV. "She likes to have my attention," said Brie.

Sometimes she's colouring and it's no problem if I'm on the phone for a short period of time. Or she's playing Lego. On Tuesday [the day reported above] when I was on the she was OK for about 25 minutes but then she was on my lap, trying to get my attention. I guess there's a level of conflict that's brewing. A bit of tension. She needs my attention, the person on the phone needs my attention. Ideally I'd wait until she was doing something else if I was going to use my phone for a while.

Brie texts a lot, with friends, her mother, and her ex, with whom she shares custody of their daughter. She describes herself as "not a lover of technology."

Throughout our conversation she expressed ambivalence about smartphone use in general and referred to her relatives as people whose smartphone use she considers problematic.

> It took [my mother] so long to figure out her phone but now she's always on it. She loves it. She texts a lot. My sister, my brother, everybody. Everybody's always looking at their phone. It's ridiculous. I remember one Christmas, we were all together. I traveled to Ontario to be there. And everyone was either on their phone, watching TV, playing video games. It was ridiculous.

I asked Brie why she thought people were compelled to use their digital devices so much. "It's nice. It's flashy, it's bright. Everything is there. It's too convenient. I don't know. It's easy? A lot of people use it as an escape. I'm not typical. Well, maybe I am." Despite expressing disapproval for the smartphone use of her family members, she did not seem overly self-critical of herself with regards to smartphone use. "I use it mainly for practical reasons. I think it's going to stay this way. And I'm comfortable with it," she said.

By "practical reasons," she explained, she meant texting, Spotify, and reading the news on the Montreal Gazette app. She characterizes Facebook as entertainment, and much like the previous participants' comments, she tries to keep Facebook at arm's length. "I get a little bit irritable with Facebook," said Brie. "There's so much information, so many photos of animals. So I'm not a big fan. Mind you, I have reconnected recently with some old friends of mine and that's been a big plus. But I do not share anything personal on Facebook. I just browse. Occasionally I comment. I don't post anything."

I asked her to elaborate on why she doesn't post anything. "I'm private," she said. "A lot of these people are just acquaintances. There's a few close friends, but most… I knew when I was in grade six. I'm a private person." As she reflected, Brie continued: "You can become addicted to it. I think a lot of people have. They spend a lot of their time on Facebook. I think maybe it's a bit of waste of time. They could be doing other things that are a little more productive."

Brie is anxious about the addictive qualities that she identifies in digital technology, and feels that she must be strict with her daughter's screen time.

> I'm very careful. She doesn't look at the computer at all during the week. Now that I have Spotify, she wants to look at it. She has her own playlist. But still -- no more than 45 minutes. We don't open the computer during the week. On the weekend I let her watch cartoons for an hour.

I asked to what extent she'd thought about how she'd intervene with her daughter's digital device use as she gets older. "It's a scary thought," she said. "I don't think I will get her a phone until she can pay for it herself. Maybe when she's 17, 16? I don't know. You have to be very careful. I don't want her to develop some bad addiction. Texting in the middle of the night."

PARTICIPANT 6: Audra, 38. Audra has two kids, aged 10.5 and 15. Shes lives on Montreal's West Island with her children and her partner, their father. She works in pharmaceutical marketing. Of all the participants in this study, Audra stands somewhat apart. She contacted me in response to an ad I placed in the Montreal Community Contact, a newspaper produced for the English-speaking Black

community. She is middle class and lives with her partner. However, many of her habits overlap with those of the other women I spoke to. We met at a fast food restaurant. Her QualityTime report is as follows:

Day 1 (Monday)

Total phone use: 1 hour 14 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 26

Apps used in descending order:

- YouTube
- Internet
- Messages
- Google Hangouts
- Gmail
- Music

Day 2 (Tuesday)

Total phone use: 2 hours 09 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 48

Apps used in descending order:

- Youtube
- Messages
- Google Hangouts
- Phone

Audra uses YouTube in the evenings only ("for distraction," she says,) and during the day she uses Google Hangouts for work purposes, and texts her friends and family. She describes her internet use on her phone as "looking for things when I'm on the go." Generally she prefers using her laptop to her phone -- she finds typing on the phone to be cumbersome -- so she uses the "Push" app to send webpages she encounters on her phone, to her laptop. "I only use social media on my computer," she says, which accounts for its absence from her Quality Time reports. She uses Facebook regularly for keeping in touch through Messenger, but says, "I don't remember the last time I posted something."

Audra's smartphone use is somewhat curtailed because she does not have a mobile data plan -- she finds it too expensive. She knows where wi-fi is located in businesses around her home and office, but not using data out of the house puts constraints on when and how she can use her phone. The only app she appeared to use for entertainment purposes, besides texting, was YouTube, all of which happened at home, in the evening. "I can definitely get lost in YouTube," she said. "Funny videos, music, there are lots of types of things I'll watch. Often when I'm getting ready for bed I'll look at it for a while. If I ever am looking at it with someone else, it'll be with my kids."

Audra's children each have a phone and a tablet. "My kids have access to their devices as much as they want during the day," she says. "But we take the devices away at 9:30 at night and keep them in our room." According to Audra, she is concerned about her children using their devices unsupervised because she

worries they won't get enough sleep, and that they could interact with predatory people over social media. She takes a day-by-day approach to limiting her childrens' access to their devices depending on what's going on at home. "There's only so much time I'm going to spend on my own device while I'm around them," she said. "And there's only so much time I'm going to let them spend on their devices if we're all together. So I juggle that," she explained.

Audra sees it as her role to maintain moderation in her household's mobile device use, because her partner uses his devices with no holds barred. "My partner has several phones, several numbers," she explained. "He was born overseas and a lot of his business is overseas," she said. "There's always a phone on his ear. The kids will often be like, "Oh, daddy's on the phone again.' It causes challenges," she said.

PARTICIPANT 7: VERONICA, age 43. Veronica has two children at home and two who are grown and living on their own. She shares her home with her 8 year old daughter Tanya and 2.5 year old foster daughter, Lacy, and her boyfriend, who she refers to by his last name, "Mr. Banning." Veronica works as a nurse's aide. She emigrated to Montreal from St-Vincent fifteen years ago. Veronica was referred to me by Zelda; they live in the same neighbourhood and their children go to school together. I spoke with Veronica in her home on a weeknight evening. Her children played together and ran around the house while we spoke to each other in her living room. Mr. Banning was at home, in the bedroom. I did not meet him.

Her QualityTime reports are as follows:

DAY 1 (Wednesday): Total phone use: 2 hours 47 minutes.

Total phone unlocks: 187.

Top apps used in descending order:

- JewelMania (game)
- Dragon Story (game)
- Fantasy Story (game)
- Facebook Messenger
- WhatsApp
- Text
- Phone

DAY 2: THursday: Total phone use: 2 hours 9 minutes

Total phone unlocks: 191.

- Fantasy Story
- Jewel Mania
- Facebook Messenger
- WhatsApp
- Dragon Story
- Text
- Phone

Veronica reported that both of these QualityTime reports represented fairly typical weekdays for her; she dropped her kids off at daycare and school, took the

bus to work, returned home by bus to pick them up, and spent the evening at home. However, it's important to note that in Veronica's case, her phone use only represents a portion of her digital device use. She is an avid iPad user as well -- as a big digital games enthusiast, she prefers the iPad's interface for gaming. We spoke about her iPad use, but I did not have access to any hard data on her use. Veronica and Zelda were alike in that they use their phones throughout the day. We went through the first day's QualityTime report, according to which Veronica's first sustained bit of phone use was at 8:45 a.m. At that time she would have done the morning drop-off routine and would be waiting for the bus to head to work. The day started with some time on Dragon Story. "I just started this game. So there's basically no money on there. So every time I go on there I build the game up, I collect money -- that's why you'll see me on there."

She then spends a chunk of time on Facebook, a "morning ritual," as she put it. Similar to Zelda, Veronica makes a habit of sharing inspirational or faith-oriented images to her network in the morning. "I have friends who share stuff on there. I check to see who sent me what, and the ones that I really like, I forward to everyone." While riding the bus, she played Dragon Story and Jewel Mania. "That's when there's nothing else to do, and I"m bored," she said.

Once at work, she will play a game or check Facebook if she has a free couple of minutes, throughout the day. "Facebook will tell me if somebody I follow posts something, like my sister in Curacao. Or someone might tag me. I want to see exactly what I was shared in. So I might check Facebook for a few seconds," she said. I asked

Veronica if she posts to Facebook often, and she said no. “I like checking Facebook, but I LOVE my privacy,” she said. “I have a few friends who are not on Facebook because they say Facebook is all about getting into peoples’ business. I don’t see it like that. People will get in my business if I put my business on Facebook. But I don’t put my business on Facebook. For me, it’s a way of catching up. And a little amusement.” She elaborated about her boundaries when it comes to sharing personal information:

“I got engaged in July,” she said. “And it’s only people close to me who know I’m engaged. It’s not on Facebook that I’m engaged. And when I get married, I might post a picture of my wedding or something. Otherwise, I don’t like, go on Facebook if I’m upset at someone and tell them oh I’m so upset. When my mom passed away I posted a picture of my mom, but I didn’t write anything. People who are in my contacts know my mom passed, and they started giving their condolences. And then everyone started giving condolences. But I didn’t write anything about it.”

Veronica characterized her home life as “stable,” and used her game-playing habits on her iPad as a way of illustrating the point.

I’m stable. I like to play games. I come home, and I make the kids dinner. Tanya does her homework if she has. I give them a bath, and they can watch a little TV depending on how much time they have. And then I put them to bed. After that, I play my games! Or I just sit down and talk to Mr. Banning. Sometimes he and I will sit at the table and play games, or talk about the day. That’s me. That’s how I like it… Mr. Banning, he loves games! We share that. We can watch a movie and enjoy. Or we can play any game. Together, or sitting together but on different games. We’ll play bingo together, on the same ipad. It could be for hours.

Veronica’s digital device use habits can be divided into workday habits and at-home habits. Based on her QualityTime reports, she seldom uses her smartphone at home in the mornings or evenings. She confirmed that, saying that “I’ll misplace

my phone when I'm at home. I never reach for it. If people want to reach me, they can come find me here." However, while out of the house, she'll be "checkin, checkin" her phone. At home, she prefers using her iPad, which she describes as part of how she spends her time relaxing. "My iPad's my favourite thing right now," she said. "It's all games on my iPad," she said. "Not much Facebooking goes on there." I asked her to show me the games she plays on her iPad. In addition to Dragon Story, Jewel Mania, and Bingo, Veronica showed me an app called Episodes that she had recently discovered. "It gives you little stories -- drama, love stories, comedy. Now that has my attention. You download the app and then you choose what kind of stories you want to read. It's almost like watching a short half hour show, each time. Only here, you're not watching, you're reading. I like that."

I asked Veronica to compare her experiences, with regards to media, between raising her two older kids, who are now in their twenties, and raising the two younger ones.

When I had my older kids, there are things that I could have hid. They were born back home (in St. Vincent). When they came here to live, they didn't do much sleepovers at friends' houses. So I basically controlled what was going on. Home, school, church. It's a different world with Tanya. Everybody's kids' have tablets. She has her own. And she has her own TV in her room. The older kids didn't have all that. I couldn't have afforded that back then.

Today, Tanya has access to lots of media through her tablet and TV, and Veronica enforces rules to try and control what she watches. Tanya once told her mother that while watching her tablet in her room, she'd turn the sound very low if she was watching something that she knew her mother wouldn't approve of. "I was

happy she told me that," conceded Veronica, "but I said from now on, if you're watching something in your room, it has to be loud enough for me to hear it." The strategy hasn't been entirely successful: "Now, if it's quiet in Tanya's room, I feel like there's probably something going on in there that she doesn't want me to know about."

Much like Shelby and Zelda, Veronica defines her belief system around her Christian faith, and is trying to instill the same values in her children. "There is a saying, you've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything," said Veronica. "That's what I try to teach the kids.

No matter what you try to keep your kids from, here, you have to remember that they go to school and what I may choose not to tell my child, you may choose to tell yours. And they share. They share their honest opinions. So there are so many things I can't stop her from hearing or seeing. But like I said, I'm trying to get her to stand for something so she won't fall for everything else out there. There's going to be even more technology in Tanya's growing-up time. But you have to be grounded someplace. You can't stop technology. The kids are going to get smarter, and they're going to build smarter things, build new ideas. As she grows older, time's gonna get worse. We're gonna get more selfish than we are. But there's not a whole lot we can do.

Ultimately, Veronica's faith seems to function both to define how she hopes to protect her daughter from the potential ill effects of technology on social life, and how she defines those ill effects themselves.

For me, I grew up in the church. I'm grounded in the bible. What I see around me -- part of the bible already told me this was going to happen. The kids of today are going to be like this. We're just to love ourselves and not care about our brothers and sisters and neighbours.

Veronica was unique among the women I spoke to in that she did not describe any experience of conflict between her kids and her own use of digital devices. This may be in part because she allows her kids to use their own digital devices when they're at home, so they aren't vying for her attention while she uses hers. Nonetheless, Veronica characterized her current mobile device habits as comfortable for her. The only real attachment she feels toward her devices, she remarked, was with her games. "I've been playing games for years," she said. "There have been times where I've quit. There were times, before I had my phone, when I had games on my computer, and it would make me late for work," she said. "There was a game I couldn't stop playing. So I gave them up. But then, another time, I started playing them again. But games, Facebook, all that, I could drop it. It's just entertainment."

ANALYSIS

I will begin my analysis by approaching the issue of these mothers' smartphone use habits as reported by QualityTime and in conversations, with the goal of understanding what strategies and tactics underlie their habits. I do not intend for my analysis and conclusions to be considered generalizable. This data is context-based and context-specific. I intend for it to incite further inquiry and generate ideas for engaging with the challenges I observed strictly within these communities and for this population. While there is certainly potential for scaling this inquiry to a broader population, the scope of this research project does not allow for that.

I will first describe a conflict I observed that I believe most of the women I spoke to are seeking to resolve. Second, I will present some hypotheses as to how they are seeking to resolve these conflicts. Third and finally, I will argue that a law of unintended consequences is born out of the way they go about attempting to address these conflicts. The second part of my analysis will address individual themes that I identified as recurring among the study participants.

"ME-TIME"

For all of the women I spoke to, their mobile device represented a chance to spend some time for themselves. Whether using WhatsApp to communicate with far-flung friends, as in Marie's case, speaking on the phone with a friend as Shelby often does, playing games on the bus on the way to work like Veronica, scrolling through the photo gallery like Shelby, or engaging with friends through inspirational memes like Zelda, the women in this study think of their phones as private spaces into which they can briefly escape. This is part of what creates tension with their children, who are astute enough to know that when their mothers are paying attention to their phones, they are engaging in a bit of momentary escapism.

"Momentary" is the key descriptor -- often, these women find time to check their phones in between or during other activities, rather than take a dedicated break where they focus exclusively on their phones. Even Veronica, whose smartphone use occurs almost exclusively while her children are elsewhere, claims to use her iPad very frequently at home, during the evening routine that is both labour intensive (cooking dinner, homework help, bathing the kids) and kid-centric.

Zelda unlocked her phone 226 times in one day. Assuming she spends 14 hours awake, she is checking her phone, on average, every 3.7 minutes. Veronica unlocked her phone 187 times in one day -- every 4.4 minutes, on average. Brie checked her phone, on average, every 5.2 minutes. Janet checked her phone on average significantly less, but this is mostly due to the nature of her day-job, during which she does not check her phone. It is worth noting that this type of behaviour is not unusual. In a report released by the Pew Research Center in December 2015, 21% of Americans surveyed claimed to go online "almost constantly." (42% reported going online several times a day, and an additional 10% said they went online daily.) This most recent survey was the first in which Pew had included the "almost constantly" option, indicating that this type of use habit is both new and widespread.

This way of engaging with their smartphones for "me-time" is one way in which the comparison between television and smartphone use does not quite work. While watching TV tends to happen for at least a few consecutive minutes, smartphone use as evidenced by this sample usually happens for brief moments, sometimes even furtively, while other members of the household are distracted by something else (often, it would seem, by their own digital devices). I believe that ultimately, the "stolen moments" quality of smartphone use among these women is part of the structure of their domestic routines. They have not carved out time for their smartphones so much as incorporated them into every part of their routines, from preparing dinner to giving the kids their baths. The women I spoke to were

able to single out moments of their day where they made sure not to use their smartphones -- the after-school hours, usually. But even during those hours, based on their QualityTime reports, they were using their phones for short periods.

KIDS AND SMARTPHONES: CHARACTERIZATIONS OF A CONFLICT

Five out of the seven women who participated in this study described conflicts that arose between themselves and their children around their own smartphone use. “She likes to have my attention,” said Brie about her daughter. Janet recalled her daughters intervening, asking that she stop talking on the phone in the evening when she came home from work. Marie explained that it’s harder for her to use WhatsApp, her preferred mode of communication, around her daughter because it requires her to be looking at the screen. To varying degrees, all of the women I spoke to acknowledged that their children sought their attention while they used their mobile devices.

Whether because of internalized discourses around what constitutes a good mother -- attentiveness, patience, control of the outside information that enters the home -- or because of having observed conflicts arising from their own mobile device use, most of the women I spoke to for this project felt that they had to in some way curtail or mediate their own mobile device use at home. (Two women, Zelda and Veronica, did not feel that their mobile device habits created conflicts between themselves and their children. However, of all the women I spoke to, these two had the most lenient attitudes to their own kids’ screen time, and I suspect that they frequently coordinated their own mobile device use with their children’s.) I

believe that the haphazard or furtive quality to women's smartphone use in this study is related to this latent conflict with their children -- but as a tactic of avoidance, it creates a law of unintended consequences.

I argue that by repeatedly checking in with their devices for short periods of time, during which they are very briefly but noticeably distracted, the mothers I spoke to are in fact creating conflict with their children -- which is the very outcome they sought to avoid by developing this quick-checking habit. Part of this unintended consequence can be attributed to the very nature of mobile device interfaces. The most common use for mobile devices among the women I spoke to is texting, and this functionality is by nature one of rapid, real-time use. Scheduling sustained periods of time for mobile device use, as one might do for watching a TV show or playing a video game, would be impractical. But whether the habit of frequent checking is inherent to the technology or not, it does appear to have a particular effect on nearby kids.

The women who participated in this study described the conflicts with their children as mainly having to do with their own attention while using their devices -- the location of their gaze -- rather than the content they are consuming. Kids did not want to see what their moms were looking at so much as shift their moms' gaze away from the devices. I believe there is a high likelihood that the mothers' constant, brief distraction are *causing* their children to react with irritation, rather than *preventing* this outcome.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL MEDIA

A common thread that ran through each of the seven interviews I conducted was that social media -- Facebook, in this case, as none of the women I spoke to used Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat -- represented a potential threat to their personal well-being. One extreme on this spectrum was marked by Marie, who had quit social media altogether with the birth of her child. While the other women I spoke to used the platform, and in the case of Zelda and Veronica, used it with regularity, they all expressed wariness about the ways in which problematic human impulses could be manifested on Facebook. Shelby referred to "showing off," Zelda referred to using Facebook "for the bad," Veronica referred to the practice of picking fights under other peoples' photos, and Janet worried about Facebook's addictive qualities, and both Veronica and Marie said that they felt their privacy was more valuable than having an active presence on the social network.

All of the women I spoke to characterized their relationship with Facebook as cautious, and they positioned themselves in contrast to others in their network. In this sense, I observed that having an explicitly wary approach to Facebook was part of how these women defined themselves. Even Zelda and Veronica, both of whom make a daily ritual of sharing inspirational quotes, were explicit in defining good and bad ways of using the social network.

I believe that for the majority of the women I spoke to, the decision to not share on Facebook is a way of protecting a modality of sociality, of exerting some form of control over their social world. To share personal information would be to

put oneself up for scrutiny or to expose oneself to criticism or even ridicule. For this reason, keeping quiet on Facebook is not just a preference but a decision based on carefully weighed stakes. Several participants remarked that people who really care about them know where to find them – at home. There appeared to be an underlying belief, even for Facebook enthusiasts Veronica and Zelda, that true friendship takes place offline. By aligning their identities to their domestic spaces rather than the online social world, I observed that the participants seemed to be implying that they were women of propriety and self-control, unlike others in their social network who used Facebook to get attention and amplify their own images far beyond the confines of their own domestic spaces.

MOTHER AS GATEKEEPER

The topic of mother as information gatekeeper emerged organically through these conversations. It became clear that it was impossible to talk about controlling the amount of time children spend with media without talking about the content of the media that they consume. And despite a pervasive concern about inappropriate content -- in particular among the three women I spoke to whose Christian faith is of great importance to the way they raise their children -- they were not very familiar with the content their children consumed. When describing the media consumed by their kids, many of these women could not name the shows that their kids enjoyed, and none of them made a habit of watching TV with their kids. The time their kids spent watching TV or playing on a tablet or gaming system was time that the moms

could spend on their own activities -- cooking, cleaning, and communicating with their own friends, often on their smartphones.

Two mothers, Marie and Janet, remarked that they were concerned that their kids not hold the screen too close to their faces, for fear that it could damage their eyes. Brie and Audra remarked that they sometimes felt concerned that their kids might become "addicted" to their devices, as they had observed among other young people in their social circles. When pressed, neither of them specified exactly how they felt that addiction could take hold, but Brie in particular observed that something about the ease of use and access to entertainment made a smartphone hard for kids to put down. None of the mothers in this study expressed concerns about possible cognitive or affective side-effects to screen-time in kids.

Based on these interviews, it's impossible for me to estimate how much time the participants' children spend watching TV or playing video games. However, I did ascertain that with the exception of Janet, who was very explicit in the limits set for her kids' time in front of the TV, this group of women did not seem very anxious about their kids' screen time. While controlling screen time was not necessarily a top priority, every participant expressed some degree of concern about the content that the kids consumed. Being a media gatekeeper is part of a mother's role, according to all seven of these participants.

The "new momism" referenced earlier in this paper requires mother to have an all-encompassing awareness of their children's lives. Although most of my study participants use media to occupy their kids some of the time, and don't seem to take

interest in sharing in their children's media consumption, they still appeared to feel obligated to express a degree of concern or anxiety around what their children could possibly be exposed to. This is not to say that their concern was not entirely sincere. But there was a sense that for some of these women, the concern itself seemed to fulfill a requirement for being a good mother. These mothers were not researching children's media or proactively steering their children toward any particular shows or games. But they are playing the role of gatekeeper for media in their homes, albeit from a distance. Veronica's rule about being able to overhear whatever her daughter is watching from the other room, or Shelby's rule about not watching shows with "violence" are examples of this.

All of the women I spoke to consider their role of media gatekeeper necessary for preparing their children for their inevitable independence in the world of media – a world that the participants themselves scarcely understand. Veronica talks about teaching her children to "stand for something so they won't fall for anything." Zelda talks about teaching her son to use social media "for the good." But they all appear to agree that as their children approach adolescence, they will be on their own in navigating the wider media world, and as mothers they will have very little self-control. As gatekeepers, they have a limited time during which to impose any kind of limits or framework on something that these women are relatively unfamiliar with.

MEDIA LITERACY

Two themes seemed to recur most prominently across the conversations I had for this project. The first was the law of unintended consequences described earlier in this section, and the second was the issue of media literacy among the participants. I observed a very limited depth of knowledge on the part of these women about the media consumed by both themselves and their children. Meanwhile, there was a fairly high degree of anxiety about the effect media could potentially have on their children as they matured into teenagers. This combination of ignorance and fear stood out to me repeatedly through our conversations. Even among women with a very strong religious identity, there was virtually no familiarity with religion-centered media produced for young people.

Two anecdotes illustrate a degree of media illiteracy. The first occurred during my conversation with Shelby, when she identified Google as her favourite website, and did not differentiate between Google and the websites she navigated to following her Google searches. Her Google search history over the previous month reinforced my theory that she has a very limited knowledge of what is available on the internet. I found that she repeatedly searched questions about her own faith and the contents of the Bible. This indicated to me that she is very curious about her faith and Christianity in general, and yet she did not visit any particular websites in order to learn more. She simply relied on the questions that occurred to her, and typed them in. Despite daily Google searches, she could not name a single Christian

website. She told me that one of the primary was she uses the internet is to "educate herself," and yet she didn't seem to possess any tools that would help her do so.

The second anecdote that reveals a paucity of media literacy occurred while I was talking with Veronica. Veronica showed me her iPad briefly, and told me that she had recently been enjoying a new app called Episodes. "You download the app and then you choose what kind of stories you want to read. It's almost like watching a short half hour show, each time. Only here, you're not watching, you're reading. I like that."

Among the women included in this study, Veronica probably has the most varied media diet; she is the only women I spoke to who plays games on her phone, and she also uses social media and text apps. After our conversation I decided to check out Episodes myself, because I was curious about what kinds of stories she was interested in. I learned upon navigating around the app that it is designed as a user-generated content platform where users share fan-fiction and other types of writing, and provide feedback on each others' work. Users can grow their following and produced more content based on the requests of their followers. In other words, while reading the content is certainly part of the app's interface, it is adjacent to its actual intent, which is communication among users about the content being published on the site. Although I didn't find this out until after my conversation, I feel confident, based on how Veronica characterized the app and its appeal to her, that she was not aware of the user-generated aspect of Episodes.

The question of media literacy and the topic of mothers as gatekeepers came together in another circumstance that I observed across several interviews. I was surprised to learn that the three women whose Christian faith is at the forefront of their identities both online and off did not know of any Christian media for kids. Their children consumed no Christian-specific media, and two of the mothers (Shelby and Veronica) expressed concern about the bad influence that media might be having on their children's morals. I have only a very cursory familiarity with Christian media, but I do know that it is a highly varied and robust area of media production with "something for everyone." It surprised me that these women did not know of any Christian media for kids. Perhaps this is due to the rigorous denomination that they belong to – the Seventh Day Adventist and Pentecostal churches – but I am not sufficiently familiar with those churches to speculate.

MOBILE DEVICE USE AS COMPETENCY

I observed that participants whose basic competency with their devices was more advanced appeared to possess a greater sense of confidence in their role as media gatekeeper for their children – even if their mobile device was not where the children consumed their media. In other words, the more comfortable the mother was with her mobile device, the more authority she seemed to feel in controlling her children's media diet. The women who used their phones the most frequently, Zelda and Veronica, seemed to take a lot of pleasure from their smartphone activities – games, Pinterest, "me time," Facebook sharing.

However, Marie, who spent less than average amounts of time on her phone (and did not use social media) took significant pleasure in her smartphone competency, because WhatsApp allows her to stay in contact with a close friend who moved away. She boasted about how quickly she can text, and reported spending hours at a time on WhatsApp while her daughter was not at home. It appears that competency does correspond with pleasure taken in the use of smartphones, and that the confidence that comes from frequent use does seem to produce positive feelings in the user. However, I don't think that this increase competency with using the device necessarily translates into any appreciable media literacy.

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the mothers I spoke to during this research use their smartphones with a degree of regularity that rivals or exceeds almost any other domestic habit they might have. This amount of smartphone use could be analyzed critically from any number of angles, because its frequency could have implications across a wide spectrum of behaviour and belief. Given the scope of this Master's thesis, I focused on the way in which participants' smartphone use shapes and informs their daily habits related to raising their children.

My research confirmed what has been found elsewhere, among different populations: That smartphone use – both brief checking and sustained use – happens multiples times per hour throughout the day. The frequency of the use

could be understood as a structuring influence on their daily routine; in about half the cases in this study, participants used their phone virtually all day long. QualityTime indicated that any moment of "down time" during the day, whether during a commute, a quiet moment at work, waiting for the microwave to finish heating up lunch, or during a bathroom break, more than half of the participants I spoke to used their phones.

In reflecting on the use of the QualityTime app, I conclude that perhaps it did not have the intended effect of sharpening the accuracy of the data. As mentioned in the methodology section, participants appeared to have kept track of the app while it recorded their phone habits, so when we spoke, they matched their testimony with what the app reporter. But the app could have been altering their point of view before I had even installed it on their phones. In a sense, I was installing an app to "keep them honest," to have something against which to verify their statements. This implies a lack of trust on my part, which they certainly perceived while I described the research project to them. There is a sense in which the presence of the app compelled participants to "perform" for me as subjects; to not engage in habits I might consider "bad" or at the very least to maintain a higher than usual degree of self-consciousness about their mobile device use while the app was going.

Did I need the data generated from the app to reach the conclusions I did? Maybe, but not necessarily. The conversations I had were richly textured with information, and perhaps were the app never installed on their phones, participants would have been less inclined to make normative statements about mobile device

use in general – which all of them did. Perhaps I would have gathered accurate data without the app. Were I to continue with this type of research, I would reconsider using a use-tracking app in my research. The dynamic of distrust it sets up between the researcher and the participants undermines the intent of the project.

During my interviews, participants reported that the primary – I might argue only – conflict that participants experience arising from their smartphone occurs with their kids. By multitasking between their smartphones and their kids, they become subject to, as I labeled it in the Analysis section, a law of unintended consequences caused by the multitasking behaviour. Instead of avoiding conflict with their children, the mothers who furtively use their phones while parenting are causing conflicts.

However, none of the participants I spoke to considered their smartphone use habits to be in conflict with their roles as mothers. Whatever conflicts arise between mothers and their children related to smartphone use are sometimes enough to compel mothers to slightly adjust their behaviour (as in the case of Janet, who stopped talking on the phone in the evenings per her daughters' requests, or Marie, who doesn't use WhatsApp around her daughter), but it was not enough to compel any mothers to characterize smartphone use as "bad" from the point of view of mothering. I would characterize the ways that this group of mothers shifted their mobile device use behaviour to accommodate the desires of their kids as tactical adjustments designed to allow for smartphone use to occur alongside child-raising.

Regardless of the amount of time mothers spent on their smartphones, they all expressed concerned about what their children would be exposed to online using their own smartphones. Without exception, mothers appeared concerned about possible threats to which their children would be exposed through smartphone use. Threats included bullying, exposure to graphic and dangerous imagery, peer pressure, and a kind of generalized amorality ("falling for anything," as Veronica put it). All of these threats were associated by mothers with smartphone use among teenagers.

It follows naturally to proceed to the next conclusion I came to from this research, related to the matter of media literacy among the participants. I conclude that in every case, it is a lack of familiarity with the media landscape, and often an inability to read and analyze its contents, that causes the mothers in this study anxiety about what their children will be exposed to. This anxiety, in turn, causes a kind of paralysis around how to effectively mediate or control their children's media consumption.

None of the mothers spoke about research they had done or particular shows or messages that concerned them. Every participant acted as a gatekeeper for their children's media consumption. However, all seven participants indicated that once their children were old enough to have their own smartphones (an age that varied from participant to participant), the children would be cut loose to make their way in the media landscape alone. This perceived "coming of age" to media independence appeared taken for granted, and there was a sense among several

participants that whatever happened after that point was beyond parental control. I believe that most participants would have a limited ability to affect change on their children's media diets given their own rudimentary media literacy, and that the anxiety that they felt might be a result of that feeling of helplessness and lack of knowledge.

This anxiety on the part of participants around their children's future media exposure could also be understood to reflect the internalization of the pressures of being a "good mother," as referenced in the literature review under the section "Mothers as a Networked Public." In contemporary mainstream media, "good mothers" are omniscient when it comes to their children's well-being, and to admit ignorance and bow out in the face of a potential threat is not in keeping with values around "good mothering." Participants did not link their anxiety to their lack of familiarity with media. It was the undefined threat of "what's out there" that they cited as a cause of concern, rather than their own paucity of expertise. But I argue that were contemporary values around competent mothering not quite so demanding of a mother's awareness and vigilance, the women I spoke to would not feel as nervous at the prospect of letting their teen-aged children loose in with a smartphone.

This research brought up several questions that I believe would merit further investigation. I think it would be useful to expand the sample size and include mothers who have recently immigrated to Canada from other parts of the world, to determine whether some of these attitudes can be generalized to cover new

Canadian mothers in general. It would be interesting to do a closer study of media literacy among new Canadian mothers as well, focusing on critical analytical skills of mothers determining how to help their children make choices about media consumption.

I believe there is also potential for outreach recommendations based on this research. My findings here provide preliminary evidence that media literacy among new Canadian mothers is limited, and that there is a need for training and support in this area, based on the anxiety that these participants expressed. There is clearly a perception that media exposure can be a threat to children and young adults, and I believe that mothers within the sample population could be supported by the promotion of media literacy, perhaps through community centres or church groups.

For the women I spoke to for this research, smartphones are some of the most intimate, essential objects in daily life. It seems important to help people get more utility – on their own terms, not on terms determined by the smartphone and app developers – out of their devices and their habits related to their devices. The issue of whether or not people use their smartphones "too much" is immaterial to me in this context. What I hope this paper accomplishes, in some measure, is an enhancement of understanding about how smartphone users in a given population can experience agency or vulnerability through their smartphone habits. Moreover, I hope that I have provided some insight into how mothers in this population might benefit from more media literacy as they negotiate their roles as mothers and as media consumers.

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